



General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

9th

plenary meeting

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New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Udovenko (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Cde. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Cde. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Cde. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mugabe: On behalf of the States members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), of which I am the current Chairman, and of my country, Zimbabwe, I extend our warmest congratulations to you, Mr. Udovenko, on your unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. Your election to that high office is a fitting and eloquent tribute to your personal diplomatic qualities and to the valuable role that your country, Ukraine, is playing in international affairs. We are confident that, under your wise stewardship, the deliberations of this session will achieve significant results.

We commend Ambassador Razali, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, for having

brought his experience and wisdom to bear upon the various special sessions and working groups of the General Assembly that he presided over during the past year, particularly in the area of United Nations reform.

May I also pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his vision and for his exemplary leadership of the United Nations. I wish to commend him particularly for his tireless efforts to assist Member States in transforming the United Nations into a more dynamic, relevant and effective instrument for meeting the challenges that confront us as we approach the end of this millennium.

Africa has consistently underlined the need for reform of the United Nations and other multilateral bodies, to promote the democratization and effectiveness of the international decision-making process. Indeed, we have maintained that such international bodies should truly serve the collective interests of the peoples of the world. It is in this context that we welcome the Secretary-General's bold package of proposals, contained in the report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a Programme for Reform" (A/51/950), which has been presented to the Assembly. These proposals merit our serious consideration. We have taken note of those proposals that the Secretary-General has implemented or intends to implement, as they fall within the purview of his powers as chief administrator of the Organization. We have also taken note of the proposals that he is placing before Member States for their consideration.



We stand ready to work closely with the Secretary-General and other delegations to ensure that the reform process is speeded up on the basis of consensus and democratic participation. What is crucial to us is that reforms go to the heart of the matter — namely, the removal of anachronistic and undemocratic arrangements introduced over 50 years ago.

The reform and expansion of the United Nations Security Council is not only desirable but also imperative if the Council is to ensure the successful implementation of its global mandate to maintain international peace and security on behalf of all States. The fact that major geographical and political groupings representing the overwhelming majority of the peoples of the world remain under-represented and without permanent seats on the Security Council is the greatest anomaly of our times. Equally anomalous is a situation in which in this enlightened age the wishes of the overwhelming majority in the General Assembly will continue to be subjected to the whims and dictates of the privileged few by virtue of their wielding the power of the veto.

Why should a small minority of States continue to wield so much power over the destiny of the majority without the latter's consent? Why, indeed, are there frequent and persistent attempts by few States to undermine and circumvent the most democratic and representative body of the United Nations — the General Assembly — on matters of crucial concern to the entire international community? What are we to make of this? Are we meant to conclude that democracy and good governance at the international level should only be at the pleasure and behest of the mighty and powerful? Surely this state of affairs cannot continue, as it makes a mockery of the lofty and hallowed democratic principles we profess to cherish dearly at the national level.

The thirty-third ordinary summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), held in Harare in June this year, underscored the pressing need for democratizing the United Nations Security Council and stressed that the process should take full account of the position of Africa as the largest continental grouping at the United Nations as far as the allocation of permanent and non-permanent seats in the reformed Council is concerned. The summit concurred with the position of the Non-Aligned Movement that use of the power of the veto should be restricted if it is not abolished. However, for as long as it exists, the new permanent members of the Council should be granted the same prerogatives and powers as the current members.

Another area of fundamental importance to Africa pertains to the reforms in the economic and social fields of the United Nations. Africa is of the view that for reforms in this sphere to be meaningful and credible they should seek to reinforce the pivotal role of the United Nations in development and, conversely, the centrality of development to the United Nations agenda. We firmly believe in the role of free enterprise as the motive force in economic development. But any attempts to re-fashion an exclusively political mandate for the United Nations will marginalize its role in development, while giving free play to blind market forces and finance capital. This is clearly contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and should be resisted.

The United Nations needs adequate financial resources if it is to continue to fulfil its mandate effectively, particularly in the light of the ever-expanding burden of responsibilities that it has to shoulder. It is therefore imperative for Member States to ensure that they pay their dues and pay them in a timely fashion. Unilateral actions to adjust the Organization's scale of assessment or to withhold funds from certain United Nations programmes undermine the very foundation of the Organization and therefore should not be condoned.

In the area of disarmament, we welcome the adoption at the recently concluded Oslo Conference of the draft treaty on the global ban on anti-personnel mines. The overwhelming support that the treaty received is eloquent testimony to the determination of the international community to rid itself of these deadly weapons, which have killed or maimed millions of innocent people the world over. Africa, which has one of the largest concentrations of anti-personnel mines and perhaps the highest number of victims of these weapons, is happy to join this international consensus. It is our hope that those who remain outside the Ottawa process will reconsider their position and decide to sign the treaty when it is opened for signature in December of this year.

The past few years have witnessed the African continent undergoing a dual process of economic and political reforms. These reforms have in many countries resulted in greater democratization, as well as in higher economic growth rates. In the political sphere, democracy and good governance have taken root on our continent. In the past few years, we have witnessed the end of the dictatorships and military governments in many parts of Africa, and their replacement by governments committed to the political empowerment of their people. In the economic sphere, economic structural adjustment

programmes not only have stimulated high growth rates of between 5 and 10 per cent per annum, but have also created an environment that is increasingly receptive to foreign direct investment and greater participation of the private sector in our economies. Most countries have also entered into multilateral and bilateral investment treaties with both developed and developing countries.

At the subregional and continental levels, Africa has taken unprecedented steps to assume greater control of its future through economic integration. The historic convening in Harare in June this year of the inaugural session of the Assembly of Heads of Government of the African Economic Community was an important landmark in Africa's efforts to build a stable and prosperous future for its people. The session resolved to strengthen the African Economic Community through the conclusion of protocols with subregional organizations, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), among others, which are essential building blocks for a viable economic community at a continental level.

For these efforts to succeed, however, it is vital that Africa receive the prerequisite support and cooperation of its development partners and, indeed, that of the international community at large. We should never underestimate the enormous obstacles that the African economies are confronted with. Africa's external debt problem and the heavy burden of debt repayments continue to drain many of our economies of the much-needed capital for development. More resources in the form of debt repayments than those coming in the form of aid are leaving the continent. There is a need, therefore, for international financial institutions to adopt a unified and coordinated approach to Africa's debt problem that will help to redress the situation. There can be no better time than now for the international community to augment our own efforts to bring the much-awaited peace dividend to our people.

Foreign direct investment to Africa should continue to be augmented by official development assistance. The steady fall of this assistance from 0.34 per cent in 1992 to 0.25 per cent in 1996 is therefore a matter of serious concern to us. We commend those countries which have surpassed the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product to official development assistance and urge others to do likewise. We welcome new initiatives on Africa that have recently been announced in the area of

trade, investment and infrastructure development. These are, indeed, a result of the recognition that Africa risks being marginalized unless innovative ways are found to support its development efforts.

Africa in terms of conflict situations still suffers from a number of setbacks. The situation in Sierra Leone, where a military junta overthrew the democratically elected Government of that country in May this year, is a matter of serious concern to us. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), meeting in Harare for its thirty-third summit, unequivocally condemned the coup and called for the immediate and unconditional restoration of the constitutional Government of Sierra Leone. Africa's message is loud and clear. The days of military dictatorships are over. Africa cannot and will not give legitimacy to regimes that willy-nilly flout the rule of law and the popular aspirations of their people. We appeal to the international community not to give solace to these military juntas in the name of humanitarian aid, but to stand solidly with Africa in denying them recognition.

Of equal concern to Africa are the crises in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), Somalia, the Sudan, Western Sahara, Burundi and the Comoros. In this respect we take note of, and reaffirm our support for, the United Nations initiative through the Secretary-General's envoy, Mr. James Baker, which seeks to find a lasting solution to the problem of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic.

The OAU is working tirelessly through the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in search of African solutions to these African problems. We call on the United Nations and the international community at large to support Africa's initiatives to resolve these conflicts and to strengthen the OAU's capacity for preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution.

We are encouraged by the continued engagement of the United Nations in Angola and welcome the adoption by the Security Council last month of resolution 1127 (1997), calling on the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) to abide by the Lusaka Protocol. Africa and the entire international community welcomed the successful holding of elections in Liberia, and we congratulate the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the important role it played in helping to bring that conflict to an end.

We salute the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo on the positive developments that have taken place

in their country and welcome the commitment of their Government to restore and uphold democracy and democratic principles. Obviously, after so many decades of dictatorship and plunder, the task of rehabilitation and reconstruction in that country is not going to be an easy one. The people of the Democratic Republic of Congo need our support in their endeavours to restore peace and stability in their country.

Indeed, basic necessities such as food and shelter, together with peace, security and stability, are the foremost human rights that the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo ask of the international community in this, their hour of greatest need. While inquiry into alleged massacres in the Congo may be important, the lofty principles of peace, democracy and good governance which we all cherish so dearly, will be realized in that country only if immediate support is provided by the international community.

In respect of the dispute between the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and both the United States and Britain concerning the Lockerbie issue, the OAU summit expressed the hope that the Security Council would consider ways and means to ensure a rapid resolution of this dispute.

The peace process in the Middle East is in serious jeopardy as a result of Israel's refusal to freeze the building of settlements in the occupied territories. There is a real risk of reversal of important gains that have been achieved so far in that part of the world. We call on the parties to the peace process to show good faith and give peace a chance.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that we believe the United Nations reform process has reached a crucial stage. We have always believed that the United Nations, as a living organism, needs to respond to its changing environment. It is our sincere hope, therefore, that we can make progress expeditiously. We in Africa aspire, in these reforms, for a United Nations which upholds universal values and interests, attends to the urgent needs of the least-developed regions of the world, and remains at the service of humanity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Kiro Gligorov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Kiro Gligorov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Kiro Gligorov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gligorov (*spoke in Macedonian; English text furnished by the delegation*): First of all, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on your election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and to wish you success in the execution of that responsible and lofty function. I am especially pleased that the General Assembly has elected to this very responsible function a very competent representative from Ukraine, a friendly country with which the Republic of Macedonia is developing successful cooperation.

The Republic of Macedonia attaches great importance to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, the interdependence of peace and global development is a standard that must be respected. It is dangerous for some to develop while others continuously regress. This trend can only be a source of conflicts, of confrontation of interests, even of wars. Consequently, there is no alternative to the strengthening of peace through the promotion of international cooperation, and our Organization faces the serious responsibility of being even more efficient and more focused on essential issues. This is the direction that the Macedonian delegation will also pursue.

I applaud the fact that the Organization is headed by Mr. Kofi Annan, a very competent reformer who believes in the irreplaceable role of the United Nations as a guarantor of international peace and security. His programme for United Nations reform, as contained in his report of July of this year, is one of the most topical issues before the Organization. We believe that the essential changes that have been proposed take into account the basic consideration that the United Nations

remain a democratic institution representing the interests of all Members. We too, much like the Secretary-General, wish the Organization to be a promoter of new changes, a true centre where countries can harmonize their activities in building a better world. Whether the United Nations will truly become such an organization will depend on all of us, and the Republic of Macedonia will continue to make its contribution to that end. In that context, the emerging priorities are as follows: a stronger General Assembly, reform of United Nations organs, and above all of the Security Council, a reduction in the number of ad hoc bodies, greater transparency of operations, and maximum control over the budget of the Organization, financial spending and contributions.

Allow me to address some of the priority tasks that the United Nations will have to face in the coming period, tasks which should not be placed in the background because of the reform of the United Nations. Indeed, that reform must be in the service of a more efficient resolution of the bitter issues that burden the international community. The credibility of the United Nations will to a large measure depend on this, for in the coming period much energy will have to be devoted to ending existing crises and conflicts and to preventing the eruption of new ones.

The United Nations has become renowned for its successful peacekeeping operations. I should like to use this opportunity to express my highest appraisal of the presence of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as my appreciation to all the participants in that operation, which has helped prevent a spillover of the conflict from some parts of the former Yugoslavia to my country.

With regard to the crisis in Albania, my country has constantly felt the need for the effective presence of the United Nations peacekeeping forces. The cooperation between the Macedonian Government and UNPREDEP, one of the most successful preventive operations in the history of the United Nations, is truly excellent. My pleasure is increased by the reports of the Secretary-General that contain the same assessments. The mission of UNPREDEP is ongoing. We believe that it should continue, for the presence of peacekeepers in the Republic of Macedonia serves not only as a dam preventing the existing crisis points in the Balkans from overflowing, but also as an actor working for peace, security and stability in the country's southern regions.

In that context, the Republic of Macedonia has welcomed and follows closely the implementation of the

Dayton Accord. It is a matter of principle that the indicted war criminals be brought to justice. The international community, epitomized in the United Nations, must not allow the Dayton Accord to fail. Hence, it is imperative to give impetus to further engagement by the Organization, in coordination with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union, in sustaining the peace process. A particularly important part of that effort, I would emphasize, is the normalization of relations between the Balkan countries, on the basis of good-neighbourliness and mutual respect. Within its capacities, the Republic of Macedonia has made and will continue to make the maximum contribution to that effect.

The agenda of this session of the Assembly also includes the development of good-neighbourly relations between Balkan countries, in accordance with resolution 50/80, adopted following our proposal at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, and the election of new members of the Security Council for the term from 1998 to 1999. Allow me to address these issues briefly.

Throughout the twentieth century, the Balkans has remained a concern for the international community due to the many wars waged in this region. The Republic of Macedonia has unequivocally opted for peace there. In this context, we are engaged in an active policy of good-neighbourliness and mutual cooperation with all Balkan countries. This can also be seen through resolutions 48/84 and 50/80 B proposed by the Republic of Macedonia and sponsored by many Balkan countries — but not just Balkan countries — and adopted with the vast support and consensus of the General Assembly. The Republic of Macedonia is committed to respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Balkan States and the inviolability of international frontiers, and to advancing mutual cooperation in all spheres. We are particularly committed to the institutionalized and functional integration of the Balkans in the European integration processes. During this session, our delegation will submit a draft resolution for the development of good-neighbourly relations in the Balkans. I hope that the General Assembly will adopt it by consensus.

As long ago as 1994, my country, the Republic of Macedonia, submitted its candidacy as a non-permanent member of the Security Council from the Eastern European group of countries, for the term from 1998 to 1999. I also announced our candidacy during my address to the Assembly last year. I am pleased that many United Nations Members have expressed great understanding of our motives and arguments, and have supported the need

for one Balkan country to be elected as a member of the Security Council. We very much appreciate the support for and confidence in our candidacy that we expect to receive from the Assembly. We would like to make our own contribution to the activities of the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole by incorporating our own policy of peace and democracy into those activities on the issues which fall within those organs' areas of responsibility. I would like to assure the Assembly that our delegation on the Security Council will act in full accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. In the period that lies ahead, United Nations bodies will continue to deal with Balkan problems and the general Balkan situation. This is reality. For these reasons, it is quite logical that the Republic of Macedonia, as a Balkan country, be elected to this function. It will be a great honour for us to shoulder this responsibility, and, at the same time, a great obligation for which we have long been preparing.

The processes of democratic transformation in many countries in the world will undoubtedly continue at the same pace in the twenty-first century. This trend will inevitably influence the character of overall and comprehensive international relations in global proportions. The United Nations and other organs within its system must inevitably take part in these changes. Only if the rules of international law are abided by and the real situation on the ground is respected can a better and more humane world be created and thus our trust in our Organization increased. I am confident that the reforms that have been announced, or rather their consistent implementation, will lead to an even greater affirmation of the United Nations and its commitment to combating policies of force and domination and to supporting peace, cooperation and the balanced development of all countries and peoples. In a word, we are confident that in this way the United Nations will be even more efficient in responding to the objectives and ideals of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Kiro Gligorov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

The President: I should like to remind representatives that, in accordance with the decision taken by the General

Assembly at its 4th plenary meeting, the list of speakers will be closed today at 6 p.m.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of India

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of India.

Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of India, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of India, His Excellency Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Gujral (India): Mr. President, it is a particular pleasure for me to see you presiding over the General Assembly. As Ambassador to the former Soviet Union for five years, I had a long association with Ukraine, and I retain the fondest memories of my several visits to your beautiful country. You preside over an Assembly that will deliberate on crucial issues before the world community, on which your experience and guidance will be invaluable. I would also like to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, on the engagement with which he acted during his presidency to carry our work forward. I am delighted also to see the Secretary-General here.

We are celebrating in India the fiftieth anniversary of our emergence as a free nation. The constitutional moorings and the democratic forms which the new nation-State has accepted and adopted rest on the vast foundation of civilizational experience and ethos. This explains the stability, coherence and creative unity of the vast Indian society, which is a world in itself. The experience has wrought in us the deep conviction that, while there are universally shared values and striving, there can be no rigid prescriptions. We see the United Nations in this image, as a crucible in which we meld together our individual contributions to a world civilization, yet recognizing the variety of historical and cultural experiences we bring to it.

The cold war cast an early shadow on the Organization, creating a situation of ideological polarization. The Non-Aligned Movement rejected this

imposition of rigidity, representing an independent and responsible alternative to the world view. This remains true, and the Non-Aligned Movement retains its validity and relevance, even after the disappearance of bloc rivalries. Non-alignment was not a by-product of the cold war. Then, it expressed the overwhelming need of previously colonized and disempowered nations to a voice, a perspective and an agenda in a politically and economically unequal and inequitable world. Today, it remains a voice of reason and constructive engagement for the times ahead, which demand common purpose and contribution from all sides towards a convergence of intent on vital, even fateful, global concerns.

Since the creation of the Charter of the United Nations, the world should have changed far more than it has in the half century that has elapsed. Decolonization is almost complete, but the scars of colonization are still with us. The present bears a heavy burden of the past. South Africa is free, but racism rears its ugly head amidst us, often laced with xenophobia. Development and growth — and even human dignity — remain for much of the world a distant dream. We must insistently ask ourselves what we can decisively do at the United Nations to make the dreams of the hundreds of millions come true, how we can make the United Nations a more vibrant organization for the world community as a whole, at a time when we need it more than we ever have, a United Nations that is better equipped to fully respond to the challenges of the next century.

As an organization, the United Nations must also evolve and adapt itself to a rapidly changing environment, the better to serve the core needs of the world community. As a country which sets very great store on the capacity of the United Nations to contribute to international peace and security, and to development — the two crucial priorities before the world community — India, like others, has a vital interest in a United Nations that continually makes itself more responsive to the needs of its Member States and prepares itself to serve them better. This, we believe, is the objective of reform. We are hence very pleased that the Secretary-General, immediately after taking office, made reform one of his priorities and we congratulate him on this commitment. Within the first seven months of his tenure, he has produced a series of proposals of impressive breadth and scope. These are before us, and many have described this session as a reform General Assembly. In this connection, I extend my good wishes to you, Mr. Secretary-General.

We judge the agenda for reform by the measures I have described. We are supportive of all proposals that, in our view, will carry forward, or improve, the Secretariat's ability to respond to the mandates of the international community. We will express our thoughts constructively with the aim of strengthening the process and direction of reform to the collective advantage of the global community and the Organization that represents it. We do not see reform simply as an exercise to trim the budget of the United Nations. Instead, reforms should contribute towards strengthening the United Nations and its capacity to respond effectively to the priorities identified by the overwhelming majority of its membership.

The crisis that confronts the United Nations manifests itself in many ways. A financial crisis has resulted from the inability of some to fulfil their Charter commitments, and from the laying down of pre-conditions to meet them. The United Nations does not have the means to execute programmes that respond to the felt needs and priorities of its membership, precisely at a time when such programmes are sorely necessary. As a result, the United Nations is in danger of being marginalized as the global forum where decisions can be taken that truly respond to the challenges of globalization. The solution lies not in piecemeal reform but in building trust between nations, and in an acceptance that in international relations democratic principles should be the norm, just as they are being increasingly accepted in national governance.

In our view, international peace and security and development are inextricably linked. The one is impossible to achieve without the other. Over the last six or seven years, there has been a growing emphasis on the political aspects of the tasks of development, such as democracy and human rights. Unless the underlying causes of underdevelopment, poverty and social alienation are effectively addressed and removed, this emphasis will remain unrealized. Therefore, the single most important target that the United Nations should set itself is the promotion of sustained economic growth in the developing countries that will lead to the eradication of poverty, and erase the tensions and pressures that have led to the collapse of governance and social order in several States, and to conflicts between others. International peace and stability will be enhanced only when all countries enjoy a minimum standard of economic self-sufficiency and well-being. Therefore, we believe that the thrust of any reform proposals in the United Nations should make the promotion of sustained

economic development the principal cross-sectoral issue for the Secretariat's programmes. We believe that there are enough intergovernmental mandates to permit the Secretariat to tailor programmes towards this end.

The universality of human rights, to which we all committed ourselves almost five years ago at Vienna, expresses itself at one level in the international norms for the promotion and protection of human rights and our collective efforts to foster respect for these standards. On a higher plane, this universality stems from the search in different civilizations for ways of protecting the human dignity of every individual. Next year, as we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we will reflect on whether the ideals enshrined in the Declaration have become a reality for people in all parts of the world. As we do so, we must build confidence in a process that encourages introspection and self-criticism, dialogue and consultation, rather than confrontation and judgement. The Declaration calls for the advent of a world order in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want as the highest aspirations of the common people. It recognizes the importance of economic, social and cultural rights as well as their interdependence with civil and political rights. The full realization of all these rights is what will give true meaning to the quest for human dignity embodied in the Universal Declaration.

India's approach to the observance and promotion of human rights is inspired by the holistic vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Indian Constitution. A strong constitutional framework, mutually reinforcing safeguards, both within and outside this framework; a policy of transparency and responsiveness to civil society; and cooperation with the human rights system of the United Nations — in particular with the treaty bodies — are the main elements of this approach in the areas of civil and political rights. Equally important, if not more so, are the assault on poverty and underdevelopment; the promotion of awareness of rights; and a policy of affirmative action for the uplifting of socially and economically vulnerable sectors of society.

This is a complex task, especially in a country of India's diversity. Many times, when the State has faltered civil society has stepped in. In India, as elsewhere, individuals have wrought miracles by working outside the established systems and going beyond traditional ways of thinking. In recent times, the most moving example has been that of a frail, sari-clad woman: Mother Teresa. Her fathomless compassion and soothing touch will be missed

by millions in India. I would like to pay tribute to this apostle of mercy who rendered service and brought hope to millions of poor and suffering people, not only in India but all over the world.

While development must be our supreme objective, we also need peace, stability and security in order to achieve it. The dangers that threaten us have become increasingly more frightening during the last 50 years than any that have cast their shadow over mankind in its entire history. The development of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons has made it possible to destroy whole populations. As the international community, we have decided to outlaw the production, possession and use of chemical and biological weapons.

However, with regard to the weapons of mass destruction capable of the total annihilation of human civilization, the global community has lived for too long on a diet of empty promises. The pretexts cited in favour of clinging to nuclear arsenals, while always questionable, have now vanished. Mere non-proliferation treaties promoted as disarmament measures only serve to entrench a nuclear monopoly. No credible steps towards striving to realize a nuclear-weapon-free world are contemplated, much less taken, by those who should be showing the way. No justifications can be proffered, as they were during the cold war.

The patience of the world community — as expressed by the International Court of Justice, by the enlightened voices of those who formerly believed in deterrence, by political and general opinion and by weighty voluntary initiatives — is starting to wear thin. Nuclear-weapon Powers owe it to the world to answer the question why they need nuclear weapons. Global opinion wants a nuclear weapons convention — as has already been outlined for the class of biological and chemical weapons — and will not rest until it is achieved. We appeal to nuclear-weapon States to align their policies with what the world wants. We see the United Nations as the forum in which the international community must continue to demand universal nuclear disarmament, and we therefore expect that the Secretariat's programmes will support this intergovernmental objective.

Under the Charter, the Security Council was constituted as a body on which the general membership conferred primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, acting on its behalf. In recent years, the Security Council has been able to play a more active role in discharging its responsibilities.

However, there is often a perception that the Council's actions have not always reflected the sentiments of the general membership. Therefore, it is imperative — and the time has come — for the Security Council to take on as permanent members developing countries which are equipped to make important contributions through their world views and historical experiences and the values of their civilizations. In this way the decisions of the Council will truly reflect the wider membership of the United Nations. Otherwise, the Council's actions will be seen as progressively less representative precisely at a time when it is being called upon to act far more frequently than before on behalf of the world community.

India has let it be known in the General Assembly since 1994 that it is prepared to accept the responsibilities of permanent membership. We are the largest democracy in the world, with a civilization replete with ancient values and achievements, as well as a world view based on a universalist inspiration, participatory governance, respect for diversity and pluralism, and a readiness for constructive engagement in the world's affairs. These strengths, we believe, would be an asset to an expanded Security Council. India's standing as one of the leading economies of the world will be progressively strengthened, and we are prepared to bear fully the responsibilities of permanent membership. India's long-standing participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations testifies not only to the dedication and professionalism of Indian soldiers, but also to the political will of the Government to actively contribute to these operations.

The core of our foreign policy is our keenness to pursue close ties and build confidence and cooperation with our neighbours, while recognizing fully that we are the largest country in the region, in terms not only of size and population but also of economic capabilities. We extend our hand of friendship not in a spirit of mere reciprocity but in good faith. Where we do expect reciprocity, unrelated to size and capacity, is in mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. We seek to advance cohesion, synergy and mutual goodwill in our neighbourhood so that together we can fully participate in and derive benefits from the dynamic changes the world is currently witnessing. Our approach has contributed to the setting in motion of a trend towards cooperation in our region.

As a large and diverse economy, we are developing new partnerships that go beyond the region and revitalize the old cultural and commercial links. Politically, this is expressed in the active interest that we have taken in

supporting the Middle East peace process — our ties with the Arab world reaching deep into history — and our strong fraternal ties with developing countries in general and with Africa in particular. In our larger neighbourhood, with which we have a shared history, we have enhanced our engagement with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a full-dialogue partner and as a participant in the ASEAN Regional Forum.

While maintaining our traditional relationships with the United States, Russia, the European Union and Japan, we have also been strengthening global trends in regional cooperation by actively promoting cooperation among countries of the Indian Ocean rim and trying to recover the cultural and commercial connectivities that have existed since time immemorial and which were snapped in the colonial era.

Global society is seeking to find an equilibrium between the opposing pulls generated by the forces of globalization, nationalism and sub-nationalism. Indeed, it is difficult to see just how they can be balanced, yet they must be or else the potential for international conflagration will be immense. Hence, the absolute need for extreme caution to prevent established nation States from being destabilized either through too hasty a push towards globalization or through the pull of sub-national demands. We see this as a challenge which we will have to face collectively as well as individually.

A global menace that threatens international peace, and to which open democracies are particularly vulnerable, is terrorism. It takes innocent lives indiscriminately, brings fear into the lives of others and shatters the peaceful existence and the normal growth of entire communities. Terrorism should be anathema to the international community because it is the antithesis of every ideal that the United Nations Charter enshrines. Its main vehicle is violence; its aim is destruction rather than development; its doctrines are founded on intolerance; and, in the means it uses and the effect it has, it destroys human rights utterly.

Incitement to terrorism and complicity and participation in terrorism across borders undermine the international system. And even though very few societies are free from its clutches, we still have not developed a global strategy to defeat this evil. The resolve is absent. It is important that we find it, not least because terrorism has a global web, spanning all countries and continents and quickly building links with the other global menace:

drugs. We in India see in our region just how deadly a poison this mix of terrorism and drugs is. The United Nations should take the lead in determined global action to root out these scourges.

The protection and preservation of the environment is an area to which all of us attach the highest importance. The commitment to global partnership for preventing further degradation of the environment, made at the Rio Summit in 1992, was reiterated and the need for effective implementation of Agenda 21 reaffirmed during the special session of the General Assembly in June this year. All the elements of Agenda 21 have to be implemented in full and we need to accelerate the process of such implementation. Any partial or non-comprehensive implementation will be detrimental not only to international cooperation in this area, but also to the threatened stability of the Earth's fragile environment. In this connection, it is our hope that the spirit of the Convention on Climate Change and the Berlin Mandate will be fully encompassed by the protocol or legal instrument to emerge from the Kyoto Conference to be held in December 1997.

What has been touched upon represents huge challenges beyond the capacity of any country to face on its own. This is why it is so vital for the United Nations, now more than ever before, to be a forum where we can pool creative ideas and lessons from our experience and to assist us in understanding and coping with these challenges. This is the ultimate rationale of reform. We will be ready to work with other countries to rebuild the United Nations in the image of our collective aspirations and as our trusted instrument to meet the challenges of the approaching century.

Addressing the General Assembly at its fifteenth regular session, I recall India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, saying here in 1960:

"The main purpose of the United Nations is to build up a world without war, a world based on the cooperation of nations and peoples. It is not merely a world where war is kept in check for a balancing of armed forces. It is much deeper than that. It is a world from which the major causes of war have been removed and social structures built up which further peaceful cooperation within a nation as well as between nations." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifteenth session, Plenary Meetings, 882nd meeting, para. 117*)

It is in this spirit that we should approach the tasks before us. I do hope and pray that, under your guidance, Sir, and under the spirited leadership of the Secretary-General, these objectives will be achieved.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of India for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of India, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now give the floor to the Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, His Excellency Mr. Klaus Kinkel.

Mr. Kinkel (Germany) (*spoke in German; interpretation furnished by the delegation*): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming your responsible office. Major decisions are to be taken at this session and I wish you good fortune in your conduct of the proceedings.

I wish to thank Ambassador Razali for his exceptional commitment. He has made us all aware of the great responsibility we carry during this phase of reform. The Secretary-General, through the impressive manner in which he presented his reform proposals, has re-emphasized that responsibility.

Nowhere else are we so acutely aware as at the United Nations General Assembly that, regardless of our origins or the colour of our skin, we have a common destiny and that we all, North and South, the small countries and the big countries, need one another.

Millions of people all over the world, especially our youth, ask themselves whether we politicians and delegates from 185 nations have drawn the right conclusions from this; whether we can summon the political will for joint action to improve their security, to give them better opportunities in life, and to safeguard their rights, or whether we will go on wasting and destroying the natural sources of human life at their expense. Those of us with adult children know how sceptical their generation have become about the capabilities of the governing class. That is good reason for all of us to stop, think and take action, and to do so here and now.

The world about which we are talking here today and the world which we participate in shaping is not ours alone. We have to preserve it for future generations as well. And this we can achieve only through a united effort. For we are only one world community that has to survive together. There is only one boat for all, our vulnerable blue planet, and there is only one common future, good or bad. That is the reality we face as we cross over into the third millennium and it is the reason why policies deriving from a sense of responsibility are not utopian. Indeed, in our age they are the only realistic approach.

The world organization's programmes and funds, that is to say, those of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Food Programme, together dispense more than \$4.6 billion a year in the form of economic and social aid. That comes to about 80 cents for every person on earth. By contrast, in 1994 the world's Governments spent about \$767 billion on arms, which was roughly \$134 per person. This gross disproportion is intolerable.

I believe that we must all look beyond the rim of our own national interests. There is no more time to lose. We cannot simply come here, make and listen to speeches and then return to business as usual for another 12 months. We have a duty and responsibility to leave our children and grandchildren a world which is worthy of humankind. And that means doing something about it now, today. We must protect the earth's atmosphere by reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. We must ban lethal anti-personnel landmines by joining in the Ottawa process. We cannot accept that we have hundreds of millions of anti-personnel landmines still in place in the ground of many, many countries in this world of ours.

We must halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and we must streamline the United Nations Organization. But above all, we must pay our contributions on time and in full. These are the criteria which show whether we are living up to our responsibility.

The opportunity for effective action is there. Despite carping criticism, international cooperation within the United Nations framework is working. Malnutrition and undernourishment have been reduced by a third since 1960 and illiteracy by 50 per cent. Most of the credit for this, no doubt, goes to the United Nations. Infant mortality has been halved in the same period — a great achievement by UNICEF.

Between 1990 and 1995 the world population increased by 1.48 per cent, considerably less than the 1.72 per cent growth between 1985 and 1990. This nourishes the hope that we have got over the hump of the population explosion. Again, this is a big achievement largely attributable to the work of the United Nations Population Fund.

Much, I am pleased to note, has also been done to improve the situation of women. This is important because with all the tremendous social challenges we face, the success of our efforts depends heavily on them. They are the natural advocates of future generations. That is why one of our main objectives still is to ensure they have equal rights, not only on paper but also in practice.

The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the Earth Summit in Rio, the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and the World Conference on Women in Beijing have demonstrated that the strategies for creating a better and more equitable world are in place. What is missing is the political will to put them into effect. We must learn to give common interests priority over national interests.

We must start to think not only of the present but of the future as well. The first step — and I think it cannot be underlined enough — is to reform and strengthen the Organization which embodies all these objectives: the United Nations, our United Nations.

There has been enough talk. Time is running out. At this fifty-second session, the General Assembly must make decisions. The backlog of reforms must be dealt with during this session.

True, Governments and politicians don't possess a magic wand with which to put the world in order. And I readily admit, as a politician, that it is disappointing to discover how relatively little we ourselves can change, even in high positions, and I take it that it is the same with the others present here. But that does not absolve us from the responsibility to do everything in our power to bring about necessary change and progress.

There is more than enough to be done. The world is still profoundly unjust. From the moment of their birth, millions of people have hardly any chance of leading a life in conditions worthy of the human race. According to UNICEF, more than 20 million children all over the world are on the move. About 300,000 children were

killed in the Rwanda massacres. As a result of the 17-year-old war in Afghanistan, another 280,000 or so have died from undernourishment and disease. The civil war in Cambodia has made some 350,000 children orphans. Every 90 minutes a child is maimed by a landmine.

Yet it is on our children, the weakest members of any society, be it in the North or the South of our planet, that the world's future and hopes depend. They are the weakest members of any society. They are little people who need big rights. How much worse off would they be if there were no United Nations? What would become of the world's conscience? Who would demand consideration for and solidarity with such children if we allowed this Organization to decline?

At this moment about 25,000 soldiers, civilians and members of non-governmental organizations are serving the cause of peace around the globe. All of them deserve our thanks and appreciation.

A week ago today five Germans, including the Deputy of the High Representative, Ambassador Gerd Wagner, five Americans, a Briton and a Pole lost their lives in a tragic accident. We mourn their loss and share the grief of their families. Their deaths are an admonition to redouble our efforts for peace. They wanted to help people in need and in doing so brought a ray of hope to Bosnia and to the people working on the ground. That hope must not be extinguished.

Last Saturday I attended the memorial service in Sarajevo. I have visited the region more than once, and the inner conflict among the people was again obvious. As before, the main obstacles to lasting peace in the region are hatred and fear among the various ethnic groups. On the other hand, most Bosnians, in spite of the terrible events of recent years, realize there is no future for them and their children if the hatred and fear are not overcome, despite all the terrible things that have been done, despite the rapes and the "ethnic cleansing".

That is why I am speaking out here today — to appeal to all political leaders in Bosnia to change their attitude and to mount a reconciliation campaign. The international community has provided assistance, making millions of dollars available. We have done a lot. We are very committed on the ground, and we want to see the results of what we have done. We believe that those who live in security and peace have an obligation to help others.

So far more than 300 troops have sacrificed their lives for the cause of peace in Bosnia. My country alone — Germany — has spent more than 17 billion marks on the peace process and on the more than 350,000 asylum-seekers in Germany coming from Kosovo. That is a lot of money, and those on whom we spend it will have to react in some way and have to give us a clear sign of their willingness to implement the agreements.

But outside help, including military support, cannot be provided indefinitely. And on no account — I want to be unequivocal about this — will it be given to those who thwart peace and reconciliation. Attempts to undermine peace, to incite the people and to torpedo the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, especially in Republika Srpska — must stop.

I appeal to all political factions in the region to use what time remains to launch a new and serious attempt to settle their differences and to see to it that Karadzic and other alleged war criminals and enemies of peace are brought before the Hague Tribunal. These people must not be allowed to sleep peacefully. But this demand must be made by the international community, not just Germany: these people must not be allowed to sleep peacefully.

We Europeans have done quite a lot this year to improve the situation on our continent in order to secure a peaceful future for coming generations. Nations that belong together are now growing together, and that in a region that for centuries was divided and at war with itself. The European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization are gradually opening up to Europe's new democracies, while Russia and Ukraine are forming a new, close partnership with both organizations.

And let the world be prepared. In 1999 we Europeans, right on schedule and in conformity with binding stability criteria, will introduce the Euro, the common European currency. The enlargement of the European Union and the introduction of the Euro are historic steps to safeguard the future for coming generations, steps that hardly anyone would have thought possible only 10 years ago. And mark my words: there will be no going back in Europe.

At the same time, we are aware that Europe constitutes only a small section of the much larger global construction site. Everywhere the harbingers of the new era are knocking on the door. Nothing is like it used to be, yet the hopes and wishes of citizens everywhere have

remained the same. They want peace and work. They want a roof over their heads, protection from crime, and schools for their children.

Thus the aims and ideals enshrined in the Charter are just as valid as they were in 1945: peace, sustainable economic and social development, protection of human rights and democracy. These aims form a whole, and there is no order of preference.

Eighty per cent of United Nations activities focus on world poverty, and rightly so, because this is the big problem that has remained unsolved since the ending of the East-West confrontation. Nearly a quarter of the world's population — 1.3 billion people — live in poverty, while 840 million suffer from chronic undernourishment. In the Agenda for Development we have adopted the right course for the fight against poverty: good governance, market economy, the rule of law, security for the citizen, regional cooperation and international integration.

Following the lead of the Association of South-East Asian Nations countries (ASEAN), the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the now-expanding Southern African Development Community (SADC), the nations of Central America too are forming closer ties. It is becoming more and more apparent that this is the path of progress. The worldwide trend towards closer multilateral cooperation is increasing, and will lead to progress, security and prosperity: it is the path of the future. On the one hand, the Information Age with undreamed-of possibilities, and, on the other, exclusive communities and citizens without rights — this does not add up.

Yes, globalization is a great leveller. Basically, it confronts industrial and developing countries alike with the same question: are we going to accept the challenge of being part of a "single world market", or are we going to mark time? A good number of newly industrialized and developing countries have chosen the way forward, and it has proved to be the right one. They have received the bulk of global direct investment, which in 1996 increased by 8 per cent to almost \$350 billion. Nor have the others been forgotten. Within the framework of the G-8 process, the new global partnership for development was established on their behalf. A beginning was made at the Denver summit in June, focusing particularly on the sub-Saharan nations of Africa.

Since 1978 Germany has cancelled debts incurred by the least developed countries and other land-locked developing countries in Africa amounting to more than 9

billion marks. These countries will continue to be the focal point of our development cooperation. Between 1991 and 1995 Germany made available 16.3 billion marks for Africa's sub-Saharan nations, and we are proud of that.

I am glad that the Security Council is holding a special meeting tomorrow on the situation in Africa. Many positive developments have taken place there in recent years, a fact that is often overlooked.

But light and shadow are still very close together. I need only mention Congo Brazzaville, Sierra Leone, Somalia and especially the Great Lakes region. My country, the Federal Republic of Germany, has played a humanitarian and political role in all these conflicts, and we recognize that the African States themselves — in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and in the subregional organizations — are making significant efforts to settle these conflicts. We must keep on supporting them.

But Africa's real problems lie deeper, in the social and economic sphere, and in the lack of cohesion among the different population groups. In my view, Europe's vast and important neighbouring continent, which has a population of about 800 million covers about 23 per cent of the world's land surface, has little chance of achieving stability and economic progress unless it follows the path of regional cooperation. Such cooperation brings stability where nations are too weak to achieve it individually.

Southern Africa is a good example. At the 1994 Berlin conference, cooperation between the SADC and the European Union was raised to a new level. At our meeting in June we and our African colleagues redefined the framework for the dialogue between the European Union and the OAU. Europe will stay on Africa's side.

Part of this support is that we are helping countries like Angola and Mozambique to rid themselves of the scourge of mines. So far mine clearance by hand has been, at least to me, like trying to remove a sand-dune with a thimble. We cannot accept that. What we need for this task is safe, large-capacity machinery.

The Oslo Conference gave rise to a sign of hope. Eighty countries have put their names to a comprehensive and verifiable ban on anti-personnel mines. I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his personal efforts on this issue. Anyone who, like me, has seen the poor, crippled victims in Cambodia, Mozambique or Bosnia

knows that these treacherous killing devices are wholly — I repeat, wholly — immoral. I therefore appeal to all countries still on the outside to join the Ottawa process and help us ban these infernal devices from the face of the Earth.

The world, galvanized by the spirit of freedom, has been totally transformed. But this new freedom and its by-products constitute a major test for us all, not only as regards competitiveness but also as regards our solidarity, our ability to show tolerance and to work together, and the opening of markets.

The East-West conflict has been consigned to the past. Here too, the question now is: are we going to try and safeguard the future for posterity, or are we going to allow new enemy stereotypes to divide us once again? There must be no clash of civilizations. Hence, the dialogue of civilizations and world religions must be raised to a new level. To me this is the spiritual challenge as we approach the twenty-first century, for only thus can we bring different standpoints closer together and mobilize the energies needed for the joint resolution of humanity's colossal problems.

I suggest that we hold a forum here at the United Nations to consider how we can generate new momentum for this dialogue worldwide. The matter is important enough. Considerable cultural energy and potential for innovation lie unused, and the United Nations is the proper catalyst for their development.

But we must be very clear that there cannot and should not be dialogue with terrorists. Terrorism has again raised its ugly head in Mostar, Jerusalem and Cairo. The vileness of the latest carnage in Algeria would be difficult to exceed: it really does take your breath away. How long can the international community look away? I know how difficult it is to help from the outside, but the world community cannot accept the cruel killing of utterly innocent people in the dark of night without standing up and reacting. We are not powerless in the face of such evil slaughter of mostly uninvolved persons. In Denver, the Group of Eight called upon all nations to sign the international conventions on terrorism. We must resolutely combat terrorism all over the world, using all democratic means at our disposal. I call upon the General Assembly to complete by the end of this session the negotiations on a convention against terrorist bomb attacks, as proposed by the Group of Eight.

Extradition or suitable punishment remains the principle underlying our efforts to combat terrorism. No one should give refuge to terrorists. We need a united global front against terrorism. To combat fanatical killers we can only consistently apply the law as well as police and judicial measures. The source of sympathy for terrorist objectives must be withered by political means. In other words, we must get to the roots, which in most cases are social problems.

On my last visit to the Middle East I spoke with many citizens in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron, and in the refugee camps in Gaza. I sensed their fears and concerns. Those who have seen the wretched conditions in the camps know that these people must be given a chance to improve their lives. They need to be able to hope again that the peace process is something from which they will benefit, that the violence will stop, that they can find work and have enough to eat, and that their children can go to school.

For these hopes to materialize, both sides must show a large measure of good will. President Arafat must do everything in his power to stop the terrorism. And the Israeli Government must desist from any measures which cause the Palestinians to doubt Israel's commitment to peace. The settlements issue remains the crucial test here; at least, that is what I believe. Continuing to build in Har Homa only makes matters worse, so a moratorium is essential. To my mind, this is the only way to reopen the door to peace talks.

As for Iran, the new Government has changed its tone. It remains to be seen whether this will lead to a new, constructive policy, especially with regard to the Middle East peace process, human rights and international law. Germany has always maintained close and friendly relations with the Iranian people, and in spite of all that has happened, in spite of the Mykonos affair, we are ready for talks. It is up to the Iranian Government to provide the basis on which these can take place.

We are pleased that Mrs. Robinson has taken up her post as the new High Commissioner for Human Rights. Nowhere is the need for a new culture of dialogue so great, we believe, as in the process of protecting such rights. This is crucial to world peace and global development. Any society that fails to respect human rights, which include the right of development, is blocking its own progress. Our policy on this matter is based on dialogue and respect for different cultures. But we also agree with Pope John Paul II, who has said that

if we want peace we must respect the conscience of the people. No civilization or religion denies people their rights or approves of murder and torture. Nor can any such action be justified on political grounds.

We need an international criminal court of justice. The statute of such a court is to be drawn up in Rome next summer. The court must be empowered to act of its own accord where genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and wars of aggression are concerned, and to do so wherever national courts either do not exist or cannot or are unwilling to prosecute such crimes. The terrible genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica are warning signs. Such cardinal crimes should not go unpunished.

Our responsibility towards future generations is particularly acute where protection of the natural sources of life is concerned. That is why it is crucial to maintain the spirit engendered by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Rio Summit. That is the purpose of the environment initiative put forward by Chancellor Kohl together with Brazil, South Africa and Singapore.

The climate conference to be held in Kyoto in December will be a major test of the industrial world's commitment to the environment. Germany intends to reduce its greenhouse-gas emissions by 25 per cent by the year 2010, based on 1990 levels. We and our partners in the European Union are asking the other industrial countries to cut theirs by at least 15 per cent. That would go part of the way towards meeting our responsibility towards posterity.

When we look at the air pollution in southern Asia, we cannot fail to admit that we urgently need to agree on a forest convention. We must put an end to the ruthless burning of forests to clear vast areas of land. Those who deplete and destroy their own natural resources will make us all lose out in the end. The eleventh hour is approaching.

Two weeks from now the decision on where to locate the secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification will be taken in Rome. We ask members to vote for Bonn. Since the secretariat of the Framework Convention on Climate Change already has its headquarters there, it makes sense to combine the two.

The General Assembly is at a crossroads. Either we solve our reform problems now and come out of our introspective shell, or the United Nations will lose political standing — that is what would happen. All regional organizations, industrial, developing and non-aligned

countries have a joint responsibility for implementing the reforms we have been talking about for so long. This applies to all areas of United Nations activity: economic and social, Security Council and finance.

The Secretary-General has submitted a bold package of reforms. Even though we do not agree with every detail, we support the package as a whole. I appeal to all Member States: let us not talk it to shreds, but make quick decisions so that the necessary measures can be put into effect. The United Nations has to be streamlined in order to increase its efficiency. Whatever savings are made through reform should be used for development-assistance purposes.

The Security Council must reflect today's political realities, one of which is the greater status of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. The debate on this matter should not be artificially prolonged. This the most important body of the United Nations, and it cannot credibly and effectively perform its role as the guardian of peace in the twenty-first century if its composition remains basically as it was in 1945.

It is gratifying to note that a large number of States regard the reunited Germany as a suitable candidate for a permanent seat on the Security Council. If elected, we will be able to make a good contribution, one that is in keeping with the spirit of the Charter.

Two years ago, on the Organization's fiftieth birthday, we solemnly pledged to hand on to the next millennium a United Nations equipped and funded for its task. That promise has to be kept, and it has to be kept by all. This means, first and foremost, paying our contributions in full and on time, because without finances this Organization is a powerless one. The European Union has submitted its proposal for changing the scale of assessments, the purpose of which is to ensure a fair distribution of burdens.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads,

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

This vision must be sustained: the vision of a world in which it is not the law of the strongest, but the strength of the law which prevails; a world in which both the

strong and the weak feel at home; a world fit to live in which we can safely leave to our children and to our grandchildren.

The President: The next speaker is the Vice-Premier and Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, His Excellency Mr. Qian Qichen. I give him the floor.

Mr. Qian Qichen (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. I believe your wisdom and experience will enable you to accomplish your lofty mission with distinction. At the same time, I would like to express my appreciation to Mr. Razali Ismail for his contribution as President of the General Assembly at its last session.

This year, 1997, is no ordinary year for China. Last February, when Deng Xiaoping, the chief architect of China's reform and opening-up, passed away, the 1.2 billion Chinese people were immersed in deep sorrow. Turning grief into strength, we are determined to heed his behest by deepening reform, opening the country still wider to the outside world, stepping up national development and promoting the cause of world peace. Here, on behalf of the Chinese Government and people, I would like once again to thank the United Nations and its Member States for the sincere condolences they expressed on the passing of Deng Xiaoping. Your kind words gave us strength at our time of bereavement.

Just a few days ago, the Fifteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China came to a triumphant conclusion in Beijing. This Congress, holding high the great banner of Deng Xiaoping theory, charts the future course of China's development with a blueprint and displays the resolve to carry forward the cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics well into the twenty-first century.

On 1 July of this year, China resumed its exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong, which wiped out our national humiliation of one and a half centuries and opened up a new chapter in our peaceful reunification. During the more than two months since its return, Hong Kong has enjoyed social stability and economic prosperity, which fills the people of Hong Kong, of China and of the world at large with great joy.

The realization of Deng Xiaoping's concept of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong carries profound significance. Firmly adhering to this concept, we will keep

up the peaceful reunification of our motherland by ensuring a smooth return of Macao and eventually resolving the Taiwan question. Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory, and the Taiwan question is purely an internal affair of China. Any country that attempts to use the Taiwan question to put pressure on China or even clamours for "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan" has acted in total contravention of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the relevant General Assembly resolutions. Such behaviour will be absolutely unacceptable to the Chinese people, as well as to all the countries upholding justice in the world.

As the international situation continues to undergo profound changes, peace and development have become the main themes of our times. The world is evolving towards multipolarity with growing diversity in countries' political, economic and cultural lives. This trend has become an irresistible tide of history.

The two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century plunged mankind into unprecedented havoc. And the cold war, which lasted for more than four decades in the latter half of our century, kept humanity in the dark shadow of war. Reviewing the past and looking to the future, people throughout the world are anxiously waiting for the establishment of a just and equitable new international political and economic order, and they are hoping to see lasting peace and prosperity for all in the coming century.

The cold-war security regime that featured military alliances and the arms race is, as has been proved, incapable of making peace. Expanding military blocs and enhancing military alliances under new circumstances can do little to bring about greater security. Relations between States should be based on the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. Each country has the right to choose a road of development according to its own national conditions, and no country should interfere in the internal affairs of other countries on whatever grounds. This must serve as the political prerequisite for global and regional security.

All countries should increase their mutually beneficial cooperation in the economic field, eliminate unequal practices in trade and economic relations, and do away with discriminatory policies with a view to gradually narrowing the gap between the rich and the

poor and achieving common prosperity. This should serve as the economic foundation for global and regional security.

All countries should step up consultation and cooperation in the security field, increase mutual understanding and trust, and undertake to settle through peaceful means, whatever differences and disputes they may have. This is the practical way to achieve global and regional security.

In the first half of the year, five countries — China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan — signed the agreement on mutual reduction of military forces in the border areas; the four-party talks aimed at bringing about a new peace mechanism on the Korean peninsula were launched; and the Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) introduced a preliminary form of cooperation on security issues featuring equal participation and negotiated consensus. These are some of the examples of searching for new models of security cooperation and of the initial progress already made.

We feel concerned about the recent setbacks in the Middle East peace process. We are of the view that the relevant United Nations resolutions should be complied with, agreements reached among the parties concerned in the peace process should be honoured, the principle of land for peace should be adhered to, and terrorist activities should stop. We hope that the parties concerned will work together on that basis so that the Madrid Peace Conference on peace in the Middle East will resume at an early date. We are also deeply concerned about the incessant conflicts and turmoil which have plagued Africa since the beginning of this year, and wish the African countries steady progress along the road of peace and development.

The past year has seen new progress in the field of international arms control and disarmament. The Chemical Weapons Convention has entered into force; the Preparatory Committee of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has started its work; the extent of nuclear-weapon-free zones is increasing; and negotiations on the efficacy of the Biological Weapons Convention have made further headway.

In our view, no one should try to monopolize the market in the name of preventing proliferation or try to interfere in the economic and technological cooperation of other countries, developing countries in particular. An overhaul of the discriminatory and exclusive non-proliferation regimes and arrangements is thus

necessary, on the basis of universal participation, and the United Nations should see to it that it accomplishes something in this regard.

We maintain that continued efforts should be made to advance the process of multilateral arms control and disarmament. The universality of international arms-control treaties should be strengthened and complete adherence to them ensured. Instead of weakening and undermining security, arms-control and disarmament efforts should reinforce it. The target of disarmament should not be shifted to developing countries, as countries with the largest and most sophisticated arsenals bear a special responsibility for disarmament.

I would also like to draw the Assembly's attention to China's recent announcement of a unilateral step of disarmament — that is, having reduced its troop strength by 1 million in the 1980s, China will further reduce its military by 500,000 troops within the next three years. This is a move of major significance in the field of disarmament.

In the past year, the overall situation of the world economy has been good. Economic links and mutual penetration among countries and regions are on the constant increase. The importance of international cooperation should be given a fresh evaluation with a view to making it broader, closer and more fruitful.

Developing countries are most vulnerable to the impact of adverse environmental conditions because of their weak economic foundations. At present, the international financial market is highly globalized and very risky. We should work to stabilize the financial market and ensure steady economic growth of the developing countries.

The Uruguay Round agreements should be implemented in a comprehensive, faithful and balanced manner, and attempts to impose a linkage between environmental or labour standards and trade must be opposed.

Environment and development pose a common challenge to mankind. The United Nations has held two important conferences in the 1990s, setting forth a set of guiding principles for the solution of the issue. We hope the international community, developed countries in particular, will honour its pledges to provide funds and transfer technology to the developing countries so as to translate the declaration of partnership into real action.

Many transboundary issues, such as poverty, unemployment, refugees, drugs and crime, need to be addressed through consultation by the international community. The work of the United Nations in the social field needs to be strengthened. All countries should, in keeping with the principles of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, endeavour to promote international cooperation. They should get down to practical tasks, the first of which is to help developing countries deal with their most urgent difficulties. We hope that the special session of the General Assembly on international drug control, scheduled for next year, will yield positive results by formulating a cross-century strategy for combating drug-related crimes through strengthened international cooperation along with effective measures of implementation.

China will continue to support the United Nations in its work in the social field and will make a greater contribution to social progress around the world.

The realization of human rights is the common ideal of mankind. All countries have made great efforts to this end, with both achievements and lessons. We maintain that the universality of human rights should be respected; yet their realization must be integrated with the conditions of each country. A review of United Nations practice over the past 50 years and more shows that when countries or regions do this they will enjoy social stability, economic development and popular contentment. When they do not, society will face disintegration, with people losing their most basic human rights and freedoms, and gross violations of human rights will even take place when chaos erupts as a result of war.

We say it is quite natural for people to differ on the human rights issue. The question is how to deal with these differences. Which is the better approach: dialogue or confrontation? I opt for dialogue. Only dialogue can enhance mutual understanding and cooperation. Confrontation, on the other hand, can only lead to further estrangement and do nobody any good. We are pleased to see that more and more countries are in favour of dialogue in handling the human rights issue.

The Chinese Government attaches importance to human rights and is dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights of its people. Having repeatedly suffered from foreign aggression in the past, the Chinese people know full well how state sovereignty and territorial integrity fundamentally guarantee the realization of their human rights. We in China — taking upon ourselves the task of

feeding, clothing, sheltering and educating, and providing travel facilities to, our 1.2 billion people — know full well how vitally important our right to subsistence and our right to development are. To enable our people to lead a freer, happier and more democratic life, we are focusing above all on the development of our economy and on advancing democracy and our legal system.

China will soon sign the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and is studying earnestly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We stand ready to work with other countries in a continued effort to promote cooperation in the international human rights field.

As the most important intergovernmental organization in the world, the United Nations occupies an irreplaceable position in international life. At the same time, an evolving situation calls for reform of the United Nations.

Last July, Secretary-General Kofi Annan submitted an extensive report on the reform of the United Nations. We appreciate his effort.

We are in favour of reforming the United Nations. The purpose of such reform is to strengthen the role of the United Nations and enhance its efficiency. Measures taken in this regard must reflect the common interests of all Member States and the results must be able to stand the test of time. To this end, we offer the following views.

United Nations reform is the shared cause of all Member States. It should allow full play to democracy, heed the voices of all sides and take into account the interests of various parties. The reform plan should be widely acceptable to Member States.

To enhance efficiency, an appropriate reduction of personnel and expenditure is necessary. What is important, however, is for the reform to put greater emphasis on development issues with a view to strengthening rather than weakening the United Nations role in the promotion of economic and social development.

The reform should help preserve the diversity in the United Nations, which is a microcosm of the diversity of the world. Only when world diversity is recognized and respected can different countries live in harmony and make progress together.

The reform should stress practical results, place value on quality, and progress in an incremental manner.

The enlargement of the Security Council should follow the principle of equitable geographical distribution and ensure a proper balance between developing and developed countries. The Security Council will better perform the lofty mission entrusted to it under the United Nations Charter only when it becomes more broadly representative.

Payment of assessed dues is the bounden duty of every Member State under the Charter of the United Nations. We urge the countries concerned to pay off their arrears without conditions and as early as possible in order to put the United Nations on a sound financial basis for normal operation.

Countries around the world need the United Nations. So does the United Nations need their support.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, His Excellency Mr. Hubert Védrine, and I now call upon him.

Mr. Védrine (France) (*interpretation from French*): May I first say, Sir, how pleased my country is at your election as President of the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly. I should also like to say to the Secretary-General that France welcomes the action he has already taken and assure him that he has our support and confidence.

I shall begin my statement by expressing a conviction on behalf of my country: the world needs the United Nations more than ever. No, the United Nations did not lose its *raison d'être* with the end of the cold war, the end of the arms race between the two blocs and the head-on clash of differing ideologies.

Mr. Arias (Panama), Vice-President, took the Chair.

On the contrary, the need for a universal regulating body has never been so apparent. The reasons are known to all. Without regret, we left the era of bipolar confrontation to enter, in 1991, a new, global, evolving world in which 185 States cooperate, make alliances with one another or compete in stable or, conversely, unstable combinations. In this world, States are no longer the sole players. The giant conglomerates, the financial markets, the media, opinion groups and non-governmental organizations all play an increasing role. Because of this, there is an overriding need for clear, fair and predictable ground rules to establish a framework for settling conflicts or mere differences. For,

nowadays, no serious problem can be resolved by one country, even the most powerful, entirely on its own.

Unless we take care, unless we manage to build a world in which the rule of law prevails among all States, a world in equilibrium between its major centres of power, other scenarios will ensue: the absence of a counterweight will encourage the predominance of a single Power, and, inevitably, that Power will be tempted to engage in unilateralism; for want of organized regional entities, globalization will exacerbate the economic — and sometimes political — struggle of each against all; States will find themselves further weakened, and some will implode under the effects of aggressive nationalism, which is often contagious. Fierce competition will render virtually impossible environmental conservation, however urgent, however vital in the true meaning of the word, as well as the fight against drugs and crime; greater respect for human rights will be compromised.

Our common task must be to forestall such dangers and, at the same time, to consolidate, together, the achievements of recent years. For this, regional groupings are one of the best possible foundations. Europe, which has been the crucible of so many wars, has been showing the way for half a century. The growth rates achieved by many countries in Asia, in Latin America and now in Africa, announce the emergence of new centres of power and prosperity. Political and economic entities are being organized and institutionalized: South-East Asia meets in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN); in Latin America, the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) is developing, as are the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in southern Africa and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the west of that continent. To some extent, one might also include cultural and political entities, such as the Commonwealth and la *Francophonie*. This is a sensible way to adapt to globalization.

However, at the global level we need a coherent, effective United Nations with the resources necessary to carry out its missions. It is the task of this body to facilitate the smooth organization of international relations and to determine universally recognized rules of law. To be sure, other organizations exist in various sectors, and these have their own, very important areas of authority. But none of them can take the place of the United Nations in giving the world of tomorrow a set of comprehensive rules. True to its tradition, France will support all the Organization's efforts to that end.

I come now to the main object of the session which is beginning. To carry out the major role we expect of it, the United Nations must retain or reacquire the means to take decisions and to act. For this, we must resolve two matters: United Nations reform and the financing of the Organization. The ability of the United Nations to act in the years ahead will depend on the solutions we find together.

France approved of the move by the new Secretary-General at the outset of his mandate to continue the study initiated by his predecessor, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The main lines Mr. Kofi Annan has proposed for the work and the impetus he has given to the process of revamping the Organization have received France's full support, a support shared by France's partners in the European Union. The remarks made from this rostrum by its current President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, illustrate this. I should like to comment more specifically on three points: the Security Council, financial reform and restructuring.

The current composition of the Security Council no longer accurately reflects the political geography of today's world. Clearly, it has to be reformed — that is to say, enlarged — to become more representative.

In this connection, we must take into account the Security Council's indispensable role in peacekeeping and thus elect countries able to contribute to this task, whether they are from the North or the South.

Accordingly, my country is in favour of the accession of Germany, Japan and three countries from the South to permanent seats and the establishment of new non-permanent seats. For a Security Council composed solely of the principal countries of the North would not be representative. Nor should we forget that, once it is enlarged, and hence more representative, the Council will still have to be effective. That is essential.

The proposals that have been submitted to us should make it possible to move forward. However, we are all aware that no consensus has yet been reached and that debates on this matter will be difficult. National interests and the concerns of regional groups must be given due consideration. In any event, I welcome President Razali's perseverance throughout the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly, which made it possible to draft a solid working basis from which we must now proceed to work to find a solution.

Furthermore, financial reform of the United Nations is a particularly complex issue. It is shocking that the United Nations should be in a precarious state and therefore in a situation of financial and budgetary dependence with respect to its debtors. I believe that we will be able to move towards a solution on the basis of three principles: what is owed to the United Nations must be paid in full, on time and without conditions. Finally, the payment of contributions should not be a way of exerting pressure on the Secretary-General and the other Member States.

With these rudimentary principles as a basis, France is open to discussion on all aspects of the problem. We will have to decide on the scale for apportioning assessments among all States. There is no perfect scale, but some are not as bad as others. The concept of each State's ability to pay, which has enjoyed consensus since the outset, still seems simple, logical and fair today. On that basis, a solution can be found that takes account of the needs and interests of each State. France will do its utmost to facilitate the settlement of the financial crisis. We can be both imaginative and conciliatory — like the European Union's plan. But our efforts will succeed only if there is respect for the rules I have just recalled, which reflect our Organization's impartiality and credibility. If the United Nations were forced to comply with the unilateral demands of one among us, in regard both to its financing and its functioning, then how could it convince anyone in the future that it is impartial and faithful to the principle of the equality of all under the Charter, and generate respect for its decisions?

I come now to restructuring. The Secretary-General has undertaken to restructure and regroup the Organization's institutions. France appreciates the logic of this approach. It therefore welcomes the establishment in Vienna of a centre to deal specifically with combating new transnational dangers such as organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism, problems that we must fight with ever-increased vigour. It is also very much in favour of integrating the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights into a single entity in Geneva where the main humanitarian aid services are already established. It also hopes that the main issues involving disarmament can continue to be addressed in Geneva.

From this rostrum, I applaud the appointment of Mrs. Mary Robinson to the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights. Her very strong personality is commensurate with the challenges her task entails. The

commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, starting on 10 December this year, will provide an opportunity to reaffirm, in the face of persistent violations and ever-recurring acts of barbarism, the universality of these rights. But we will also have to ask ourselves, in addition to making the usual declarations that are still necessary, what political and economic actions are needed to make real headway, in specific situations, towards respect for human rights, and how the emergence of democracies can be encouraged from outside.

The United Nations, while adapting, must remain the preferred instrument for taking action in the interests of peace. At this time, the United Nations is really the only organization that can try to bring order to an international society which is becoming fragmented and globalized at the same time. The United Nations is faced with both a resurgence of every kind of micro-nationalism and the strengthening of regional entities. Most conflicts are now not between States but within them. Given these new challenges, the United Nations has already demonstrated how adaptable and flexible it is. But we must continue. To ensure the lasting settlement of conflicts, consciences have to be assuaged and justice needs to be done to put an end to the endless cycle of revenge. The perpetrators of the most serious crimes must be tried impartially, with respect for the rights of the defence, and after an exemplary investigation which reveals the facts in full. This is why France supports the action of the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and hopes that the forthcoming conference on an international criminal court will be a success.

Since the beginning of the decade, the Organization's actions to promote peace and international stability have changed radically. The time has passed when large-scale peacekeeping operations were mounted solely under the blue flag of the United Nations, in Cambodia and the former Yugoslavia for example, in order to take on massive challenges alone. Today, the United Nations intervenes more and more frequently in conjunction with other organizations or by authorizing the action of regional actors. In Europe, the United Nations is pooling its efforts with those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in sensitive theatres of operation, and even with those of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In Africa, for the first time, the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) have in the past year appointed a joint special representative in the person of Ambassador Sahnoun, in the Great Lakes region. It is good that these two organizations are working together. This development must be

encouraged. We must also help African States and organizations to strengthen their own peacekeeping capabilities. To this end, countries outside the African continent must pool their efforts and not multiply the number of rival and sometimes redundant initiatives. For instance, the Government of France, the United Kingdom and the United States recently agreed to act together with all those who wish to do so to strengthen the peacekeeping capabilities of African countries, under the auspices of the United Nations, of course, and in cooperation with the OAU.

But, in France's view, encouraging Africa to become more involved in resolving crises certainly does not mean that the international community should relinquish its other responsibilities with regard to the African continent. It is therefore essential that the United Nations be ready, once the declared conditions are met, to act in Congo-Brazzaville. By the same token, the many recent tragedies in the Great Lakes region make sustained international involvement indispensable. This United Nations commitment to promote peace and development must also serve to further human rights. That is why it is important for the humanitarian investigative task force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to be able to carry out its mission. I might add that by spending too much time talking about crises in Africa, one might forget the essential point, namely that the African continent is taking off in quite an unprecedented way. My country believes in this.

We are all still mobilized by the situation in the Middle East. The peace process, set in train on the initiative of clear-sighted and courageous men on both sides, raised tremendous hopes. We can clearly see the increasingly tragic consequences to which the current stalemate would lead, were it to last. The peoples of this region are once again stuck in an impasse, in a situation of humiliation, resentment, and the fear of terrorism. New efforts are therefore necessary so that these two peoples, Israeli and Palestinian, which are matched in terms of insecurity and fear of the future, can together find justice and security. France gave its full support to the action by the American Secretary of State, who recently went to the Middle East. Indeed, the United States has a special responsibility and special means to attempt to reinvigorate the peace process and effectively combat the deadly acts of extremism. France and Europe are ready to take part in any constructive move to this end.

What can the United Nations do? It cannot take the place of the parties concerned, which have the primary

responsibility. It is up to the Organization to state, or restate, the law and to recall the principles which must be the basis for any peace if we want it to last. I refer here to the resolutions adopted by the Security Council on the conflict in the Middle East, not forgetting resolution 425 (1978), which deals with the integrity of Lebanon in particular.

Many other crisis situations where the wounds have not healed could be mentioned from this rostrum — so diverse is the work of the United Nations. In particular, I am thinking of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where security has been restored but where the construction of a State with viable democratic institutions remains uncertain; and of Albania, where the new stability, thanks to resolute European action authorized by the United Nations, is giving rise to new hopes. I am also thinking of the tenacious efforts of the United Nations to contain or defuse the crises in Haiti, Cyprus, Georgia, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and elsewhere.

Finally, let us not forget, now or ever, much-needed development assistance.

Of course, the insertion of emerging economies, including the former underdeveloped economies, into the global economy is an excellent thing; indeed, past efforts in this regard have proved to be well founded. But this must not be a selfish excuse for the rich countries to give up their effort to provide development assistance, which is equally necessary. In any event, this is very much an imperative for the leaders of the member States of the Francophone community. The summit of these States in Hanoi in November will attest to their interest in more balanced development and also to their commitment to respecting the multiplicity of cultures and languages.

I will say no more, however — other than to draw one single conclusion. While the world has changed so much over the past 50 years, and even more over the past six years, its inhabitants still voice the same needs. The rule of law must be continually consolidated and the democratic ideal put into practice, faced as we are with the temptations of oppression and the use of force, for which new pretexts are constantly being invoked. How can we be sure that the factors that make for war and chaos are banned for ever from all continents, including Europe?

At this moment of our Organization's reform, let us not forget the lessons of history. Only international dialogue, the common management of crises, beginning with their prevention, and the wise conservation of the

earth's resources make it possible for the voice of reason and peace to prevail and for confidence in progress to be rebuilt. The United Nations is the right and the only legitimate forum for such international discussions, and the only one where they are universal. Our Organization is an irreplaceable framework and a vital necessity for us all. In the past, it has often been able to deter, address, resolve and prevent. Let us reform it so as to make it even more useful.

The Acting President (interpretation from Spanish): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Angel Gurria, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

Mr. Gurria (Mexico) (interpretation from Spanish): Let me first of all congratulate the President on his well-deserved election. It is a source of satisfaction to us that the President of his country, Ukraine, Mr. Leonid Kuchma, is on this very day starting a state visit to Mexico.

To the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, we extend our sincere gratitude for the extremely dynamic way in which he is discharging his important responsibilities, and particularly for his significant contribution to the process of reform of the Organization.

The work of this session of the General Assembly will cover the main items on the international agenda. Allow me to begin this statement by referring to those which are of particular significance to my country.

In relation to the topic of disarmament, significant steps have recently been taken. Some prominent ones have been the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the approval of a Convention prohibiting anti-personnel mines, and the forthcoming conclusion of an inter-American convention against the illicit traffic in arms, munitions and explosives.

Also prominent at the regional level are the efforts the Rio Group has decided to undertake towards beginning consultations with a view to establishing criteria for self-regulation in the purchase and transfer of certain types of sophisticated conventional weapons. Latin America is one of the regions with the lowest military expenditures in the world, and there will be no grounds for asserting that an arms race exists among our countries. There is, nonetheless, agreement to prevent this from happening, and, accordingly, we hope that the meeting to be convened in Cancun next January by the Rio Group itself, with the participation of all its member States, will

attain its objectives. Despite all these advances, we reiterate our concern at the lack of tangible nuclear disarmament measures, and we stress that the issue continues to be the responsibility of the international community as a whole, and not the exclusive province of the nuclear Powers. Accordingly, we regret that the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996, which called attention to the illegality of the use of nuclear weapons and the obligation to negotiate nuclear disarmament measures, has not been taken into account by the main nuclear-weapon States.

It is appropriate to recall that when the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was indefinitely extended, a series of commitments was drawn up with a view to making progress towards nuclear disarmament, but so far not even the most minimal progress has been made. In an effort to break the impasse, Mexico, along with other countries, submitted to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva a programme of action, in which we called for the consideration and analysis of certain concrete disarmament measures with all the seriousness they deserve.

To the same end, we support increasing the number of nuclear-weapon-free zones, along the lines of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America — the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Mexico will continue to support the Brazilian initiative to consolidate the southern hemisphere as a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

With reference to the Convention banning the use of anti-personnel mines, it should be pointed out that the recent approval of that instrument in Oslo was the culmination of negotiations which had been conducted for one year within the framework of what is called the Ottawa process, as a result of an initiative by the Core Group formed by Mexico, Canada and other countries in October 1996. The Government of Mexico considers that the use of this category of weapons constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, and that the only viable solution to the problems it poses is the total abolition of anti-personnel landmines and the destruction of those currently stockpiled. Mexico welcomes the result achieved, with the justified hope that the countries which still remain outside the process will join in it.

Let us not continue to regard peace as an unattainable objective or a utopian dream. Peace is not only the absence of war, but a way of life which establishes as the norm cooperation among free and equal nations to overcome the problems that plague human beings in all corners of the

world. Peace is and must be possible, because it is essential to us.

Mexico views drug trafficking as a serious threat to its national security and to the health of humankind. We maintain that this phenomenon promotes violence, corruption and other unlawful activities, such as illegal arms-trafficking, money-laundering and the diversion of chemical precursors.

Among the possibilities offered by international cooperation in this sphere, Mexico has been extremely active in signing bilateral agreements to combat drug trafficking and in participating in forums dealing with the subject, such as the Inter-American Commission for Drug Abuse and the Rio Group. To this must be added the important process initiated by Mexico for the purpose of holding, in June next year, a special session of the General Assembly devoted to the consideration of the world situation with regard to the illicit drug problem, so that concrete measures against drug-trafficking and its associated crimes can be agreed upon. We invite all the Member States of the United Nations to participate actively at the highest level in that special session.

Mexico rejects repressive police measures to prevent and control migratory flows, convinced as we are that the use of such methods, far from resolving problems, clouds relations between frontier communities and many times leads to the abuse and mistreatment of migrants by the authorities responsible for applying migration policy.

As part of an effort to seek multilateral solutions to this problem within the framework of the fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights, the Mexican delegation submitted a draft resolution on migrants and human rights, which was adopted by consensus, both in the Commission and in the Economic and Social Council.

On the basis of the Mexican initiative, the Commission on Human Rights decided to establish a group of experts to formulate recommendations on strengthening the promotion, protection and exercise of these rights. We have a well-founded hope that it will be possible to secure the establishment of a minimum standard of conduct for countries in relation to migrants, regardless of their legal status.

Recently, in the states of Texas and Virginia of the United States of America, two Mexican citizens were executed after all the means of recourse that could be

used to obtain the commutation of their death sentences had been exhausted. In neither of the two cases was the person concerned able to contact the consulate of his country at the time he was arrested. This was a flagrant violation of article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. This irregularity probably cost them their lives. There are 35 more Mexicans who have been sentenced to death in the United States, and a number of them did not have access to the consular protection to which they were entitled. The state of Texas went so far as to justify the omission by saying that it was not a party to the Convention in question. In the case of Virginia the State Department of the United States offered "profuse apologies" to the Government of Mexico after the Mexican national had been executed.

Mexico wishes to denounce, in this highest forum of mankind, this appalling state of affairs. We shall be seeking an advisory opinion from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on the legality of applying the death penalty when an international convention that affects due process has not been complied with. In our view, this violates the spirit and letter of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man, the juridical importance of which has been recognized by the Court to which I have referred.

We are convinced that at this session of the General Assembly — imbued with new leadership and having placed on its agenda a number of reports containing specific proposals for progress in the reform process, including the one submitted by the Secretary-General himself on 16 July this year — we are at the threshold of a new phase in the Organization's development.

With the same resolve with which it has invariably welcomed any effort to raise international affairs to the sphere of law, Mexico, as a founding Member of the Organization, reiterates its full readiness to contribute to the efforts we shall have to make to face this challenge.

For a number of years, when the issue of reform was discussed we were content to pursue the rationalization of the work of the United Nations through changes which did not entail amendments to its founding Charter. Nevertheless, the present juncture is so crucial that we need to analyse where the defects that have prevented us from being more efficient as an Organization are to be found, in order to redress them.

I would like to reiterate some of the basic positions Mexico maintains on the subject of the reform of the Organization, while at the same time adding now some

comments regarding the proposals made by the Secretary-General, as well as referring to some decisions which we have taken recently.

We maintain that absolutely scrupulous respect for the principles of law embodied in the Charter, including in the decisions the Security Council has to take on matters affecting the peace and security of the world, is a fundamental rule of conduct of countries in their international relations.

Since 1945 Mexico has attacked the very concept of a division between permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council, basically because the existence of the two categories establishes a discriminatory situation — a situation which is exacerbated by the permanent members having been given the right of the veto, a privilege that has certainly been abused and has frequently prevented the Council from fulfilling its basic task.

We also maintain that the need to increase the capacity of the United Nations to prevent conflicts and resolve those that exist requires not only the reform of the Security Council and its working methods, but also the strengthening of the mechanisms for resolving conflicts through peaceful means.

With regard to the Secretary-General's proposals, we welcome them and view with special interest the idea of strengthening the Secretariat by creating a post of Deputy Secretary-General and establishing a strategic planning unit. We do not believe, however, that the objective of cutting costs should guide the reform process. Avoiding duplication and implementing the programme of the Organization in an optimal way are the objectives that should guide our work.

Mexico has repeatedly maintained that the financial situation the Organization is experiencing stems from a failure to comply with the obligations derived from the Charter. The current financial situation has no link with the assessment system. The way to deal with it is by making full, timely and unconditional payments of the assessments the General Assembly assigns to Member States. If we must review the financial situation, then certainly all of us Member States are ready to do so, as long as the result is an equitable solution.

The financial crisis of the Organization should not lead us to take decisions that distort the spirit of reform we share. Carried to the extreme, this logic would call for

the designation of Ted Turner as a permanent member of the Security Council, with the right of veto. By the way, we appreciate Mr. Turner's generosity.

We view with concern some of the proposals made for merging subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council — for example, the Commissions on Narcotic Drugs and Crime Prevention — which could in our view devalue the treatment accorded to these subjects. The merger of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights, on the other hand, would undoubtedly strengthen treatment of the subject. Thus, while we consider that the new tasks to be performed by the High Commissioner should be in conformity with the provisions of the international instruments in force and the guidelines of the competent bodies in this field, we strongly support this proposal. We also welcome Mary Robinson as High Commissioner.

In relation to the reform of the Security Council, the Mexican Government wishes to draw particular attention to the following elements in the declaration adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group on 24 August 1997 in Asunción, Paraguay, marking the first occasion on which that forum has conducted an in-depth exchange of views on this important issue.

Reform of the Council is needed in order to correct the imbalances in its current composition, improve its decision-making mechanisms and make the conduct of its work more transparent. A reform resulting in treatment that discriminates between developed and developing countries would not be acceptable. The veto should be restricted, as a first step, to Chapter VII of the Charter. The expansion, the reform of working methods and the question of the veto form an integral part of the reform of the Security Council and should form parts of the same agreement; in other words, we view them as an indivisible whole.

Lastly, the Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group reiterated their readiness to continue participating actively in the Working Group dealing with the subject, with a view to securing general agreement, and decided to give their Ministers for Foreign Affairs

“responsibility for maintaining a broad dialogue on the issue which takes the regional interest into account and seeking understandings on the subject”.

Representativeness, political legitimacy, the regional approach and consensus solutions are thus the elements that should guide the work being undertaken.

To the extent that the above criteria are met, Mexico wants to make it clear that it is fully prepared to participate in an expanded, renewed and representative Security Council. Nevertheless, the reform of the Security Council must be a factor promoting cohesion and a catalyst of cooperation among countries. At present, there are so many and such diverse formulas that we run the risk of the issue causing divisions and tensions.

Clearly, the international community has not yet found the formula for achieving consensus on this delicate matter. The issue calls for additional consultations and better definitions of the very meaning of reform. States cannot conceive of Security Council reform as a source of national prestige or a way of consolidating regional hegemonies. Any reform that is adopted must be inclusive and strengthen regional equilibriums, which are sometimes very fragile and very vulnerable.

Today, the States Members of the United Nations appear, for the most part, to feel threatened more than imbued with hope by the proposals that are circulating with regard to the Security Council. A wave of lobbying and national and regional expectations has been unleashed in which the interests of the Organization itself are conspicuous by their absence. This is precisely the opposite of the spirit we want to achieve through reform.

It would be paradoxical and unacceptable if this crucial challenge which the reform of the Security Council poses us were to result in a fragmenting of the United Nations at a time when unity of purpose and community of efforts are more important than ever. The issue is too important to be dealt with hastily.

The reform package proposed by the Secretary-General is capable of making rapid progress, supported by a broad consensus. The issue of the Security Council does not appear to have secured the same level of agreement. Let us make progress on the first and continue to reflect on the second.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.